

## MINUTES

### STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

Ladislaus B. Dombrowski Board Room  
John A. Hannah Building  
608 West Allegan  
Lansing, Michigan

February 23, 2001  
10:00 a.m.

Present: Mr. Arthur E. Ellis, Chairman  
Mrs. Kathleen N. Straus, President  
Mrs. Sharon L. Gire, Vice President  
Mr. Michael David Warren, Jr., Secretary  
Mrs. Eileen Lappin Weiser, Treasurer  
Mrs. Marianne Yared McGuire, NASBE Delegate  
Mr. John C. Austin  
Dr. Herbert S. Moyer  
Mrs. Sharon A. Wise  
Mr. Scott Jenkins, representing Governor John Engler, ex officio

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Ellis called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. Mr. Ellis asked that the record show Mrs. Dorothy Beardmore, former Board member was also present.

#### II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND ORDER OF PRIORITY

**Mrs. Wise moved, seconded by Mr. Warren, that the State Board of Education approve the agenda and order of priority.**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

#### III. APPOINTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Mrs. Straus said the Board reached a consensus at its February 22, 2001, meeting to postpone further discussion on the selection of the Superintendent of Public Instruction until this special meeting. She said the Board was very impressed with each of the candidates and felt the interviews went well. She said that one of the Board's most important functions is to select the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and it is not an easy task. She said the position requires skill, leadership, vision, knowledge of the

education system, and political savvy not only in the legislative and gubernatorial arena, but at the local level as well.

Mrs. Straus asked each Board member to express his/her opinions of what they have heard over the last couple of days, and indicate their top choice(s). She said once that is complete, discussion will ensue until, hopefully, a consensus is reached.

Each Board member was asked then to indicate their preferences out of the pool of candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction, beginning with the President, Vice President, and Secretary followed by the remaining Board members.

Mrs. Straus: Dr. James Redmond has done many good things in Oakland County including convincing the wealthier districts to help the poorer districts to improve, and has changed attitudes in Oakland County. The school districts in Oakland County are very supportive of Dr. Redmond, and Mrs. Straus said she was very impressed by his accomplishments.

Mr. Thomas Watkins has experience in running a state department, has worked closely with the business community, and knows how to build coalitions.

Dr. Christa Adams is also a strong candidate.

Mrs. Gire: Mr. Thomas Watkins has some very strong points, including experience in the administration of a large state agency. He may not have as much K-12 experience as some of the other candidates, but he has built relationships in working with them. He also has a broad base in terms of community business, non profit, and others that would be very helpful. He would be a strong public speaker, advocate for the Board, and an active coalition builder. Mrs. Gire was impressed with his strong commitment, in particular to helping low income kids.

Dr. James Redmond also came through very strong in terms of his K-12 experiences and contributions. He has worked in low achieving districts, and has received excellent endorsements. Mrs. Gire has no question about his commitment to addressing the issues that a multi-cultural society presents. Dr. Redmond has experience and a perspective in dealing with the issues related to charter schools.

Dr. Christa Adams presented a very strong background, and

Mrs. Gire liked the fact that although she has not worked specifically with turning around low achieving schools, she said the Board needs to do something research based. Dr. Adams clearly has experience in multi-cultural issues, and has taken a number of initiatives in the community college arena. Her management, public speaking skills, as well as her presence are strong. She obviously understands the importance of coalition building.

Mr. Warren:

Dr. William Bushaw is clearly committed and dedicated to public education, and has a passion for excellence. Mr. Warren thinks all of the candidates care deeply about public education, but Dr. Bushaw was focused on how to make ground level education excellent. That has been apparent throughout his career. He has a great breadth of experience in dealing with people at the local level, and visits schools on a regular basis. He has a breadth of knowledge that ranges from the local to the state level. His Naval and principal experience reveals that he has the management capacity necessary to run the Department, and he thinks outside the box. He understands that Michigan is undergoing a transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, and talked about reaching out to individual children, and developing a customized learning plan. Unlike the other candidates, Dr. Bushaw has an immediate plan of action regarding how to improve the reading skills of underprivileged children, and he would have immediate impact in improving public education in the state. Dr. Bushaw is well known and respected in the field, and Mr. Warren feels that he would be a unifying choice for the Board. Mr. Warren said he thinks that by selecting Dr. Bushaw, the Board would send a message that it cares about student improvement, academic achievement, instant credibility for trying to improve schools, and increasing accountability and assessment. Dr. Bushaw is his first choice.

Mr. Austin:

Mr. Thomas Watkins is the kind of person who can bring leadership to the education community, and has the proven ability to work across the aisle, within the business community, and with educators to effectuate change and help improve struggling schools. Mr. Austin said he feels the Board needs to be the center point for shaping the education policy debate and helping to improve education in Michigan. He said a priority for him would be to have a Superintendent who will be a fierce advocate and effective administrator and can harness the resources of Michigan society and put them to work. He said improving education is centered in what is done as a statewide community to put the resources, the programs, and the policies in place. He said he

wants someone who can help shape that policy debate and drive it in the right direction, and therefore, Mr. Watkins is his first choice.

Dr. James Redmond has the ability, commitment, credibility, and experience to reach into troubled school districts and help lift those children up. He is a very strong second choice for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Mrs. McGuire: Dr. James Redmond is the one person Mrs. McGuire feels fills all the requirements outlined by the Board. She said he has experience in the K-12 arena, and has had to figure out where the problems are and fix them. He initiated programs to lift achievement and test scores in Oakland County, and recognized that there is still work to do. He is not afraid to meet the challenges of the future, and will have the guidance and vision to deal with them. Dr. Redmond is her first choice.

Mr. Thomas Watkins has experience running a major state agency and would be an effective spokesperson for the Board as well. Mr. Watkins is her second choice.

Dr. Moyer: Dr. James Redmond has done a fine job of representing himself and his accomplishments in Oakland County. His interfacing on a governmental basis is impressive, and his insights on K-12 education, especially special education, is effective. He has worked well with both inner city and affluent schools, and he has a passion for public education. Dr. Redmond is Dr. Moyer's first choice.

Mr. Thomas Watkins came across as an individual who would make a good spokesperson for public education, and the Board needs that kind of representation. Mr. Watkins has a strong economic development background, and has been instrumental in the development of K-12 initiatives. He has been the director of a major state agency, and has proven that he recognizes the collaborative necessity to make public education a success. Dr. Moyer was also impressed by Mr. Watkins' Michigan roots, and therefore, Mr. Watkins is his second choice.

Mrs. Wise: Dr. Thomas Jandris has the ability to shape education policy, knows education, and has the vision and experience necessary to articulate educational issues. Dr. Jandris is her first choice.

Dr. William Bushaw would be an excellent leader for Michigan's educational issues. His passion for excellence, his commitment to

individual students and literacy is very strong, and therefore, she would also support Dr. Bushaw as Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Mrs. Weiser: Dr. William Bushaw has the ability to function politically and could discharge all the responsibilities of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. He has a thorough understanding of education, large systems, and how to drive change through sensitivity. He is able to blend old and new to create a compelling and inspiring vision, and Mrs. Weiser thinks that he would be a strong force for motivation in the field. His selection would send a very strong message to the people who work in education in Michigan, and that the Board believes in substance and change. He would be effective and successful in all the skills required for this job, and therefore, Mrs. Weiser selects Dr. Bushaw as her first choice for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Mr. Thomas Watkins has the ability to function politically and could discharge the responsibilities of this job very well. Mr. Watkins is her second choice.

Mrs. Beardmore: Dr. William Bushaw has the most complete understanding of the uses of technology, and that education is not going to be able to continue with just minor modifications. She said it needs to be changed very thoroughly, and the programs that Dr. Bushaw has experience in, and the approaches he has taken will work toward that end. Dr. Bushaw is her first choice.

Mr. Thomas Watkins has the political savvy, and ability to be effective in government, and she feels that he would be very effective as Superintendent of Public Instruction. Mr. Watkins is her second choice.

There was extensive discussion regarding Dr. James Redmond, Mr. Tom Watkins, and Dr. William Bushaw and how each candidate's strengths and political savvy would help improve public education in Michigan, and work effectively with the Board, Department of Education staff, Legislature, Governor, and local communities.

Mrs. Straus said Governor Engler has stated that any of the candidates would be acceptable to him, and feels that they will be able to work effectively together.

The Board felt that all the candidates were qualified to fill the position of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and that they all demonstrated great skill and ability.

**Mrs. Straus moved, seconded by Mr. Warren, that the State Board of Education**

**appoint Mr. Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., to the position of Superintendent of Public Instruction.**

**A roll call vote was taken on the motion:**

**Straus - aye**

**Warren - aye**

**Wise - nay**

**Weiser - nay**

**Austin - aye**

**Gire - aye**

**McGuire - aye**

**Moyer - aye**

**The motion carried.**

**Mrs. Straus moved, seconded by Mr. Austin, that the State Board of Education appoint a Subcommittee of the Board consisting of the President, Vice President, and Secretary to enter into contract negotiations with Mr. Watkins. The contract will be presented to the Board for approval at the March 15, 2001, Board meeting or as soon as practical thereafter.**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael David Warren, Jr.  
Secretary